United Nations A/50/PV.71

General Assembly

Official Records

Fiftieth Session

71st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 28 November 1995, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Agenda items 20 and 154 *(continued)*

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/203-E/1995/79 and Add.1)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/50/286-E/1995/113, A/50/292-E/1995/115, A/50/301, A/50/311, A/50/423, A/50/424, A/50/447, A/50/455, A/50/464, A/50/506, A/50/522, A/50/534, A/50/654 and A/50/763)

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/50/743)

Draft resolutions (A/50/L.27, A/50/L.29, A/50/L.30, A/50/L.31, A/50/L.32, A/50/L.33)

(c) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/418)

Draft resolution (A/50/L.26)

Participation of volunteers, "White Helmets", in activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development

Note by the Secretariat (A/50/542)

Draft resolution (A/50/L.23)

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): In connection with sub-item (b) of agenda item 20, the Assembly has before it draft resolution A/50/L.33, "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti".

I should like again to remind members that, as announced at yesterday's meeting, the Assembly has deferred to a later date, to be announced, consideration of two aspects of sub-item (b) of agenda item 20, namely, those concerning the special emergency assistance for the economic recovery and reconstruction of Burundi, and the international cooperation and assistance to alleviate the consequences of war in Croatia,

95-86810 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

as well as sub-item (d) of agenda item 20, concerning emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan.

I now call upon the representative of Djibouti to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.33.

Mr. Dorani (Djibouti) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the delegation of Djibouti, I should like to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.33, "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti".

As members will note, this year's updated draft resolution is designed to deal with the current situation in our country. Although its format is no different from that of resolution 49/21 F of 20 December 1994, adopted at last year's session of the General Assembly, its aim is to be pragmatic and effective.

The preamble of the draft resolution notes the economic and social difficulties in my country created by natural disasters, such as floods and cyclical droughts, as well as by such external factors as the prolonged effects of previous regional conflicts, notably in Somalia, which have made the task of the State more difficult owing to the large number of refugees and displaced persons on its territory and which have also disrupted services, transport and trade, draining the State of most of its revenues.

To remedy the situation, the draft resolution notes with satisfaction that the Government of Djibouti has approved the structural adjustment programme presented by the International Monetary Fund and expresses the conviction that the donor community will take effective measures to assist Djibouti to continue the policy that is in the course of implementation.

The draft resolution also notes with appreciation the efforts of the United Nations Inter-Agency Assessment Mission to Djibouti organized in April 1994 and led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and it requests the Mission to reformulate its recommendations. It notes with gratitude the support provided by all who have helped and are currently helping Djibouti.

In its operative part, the draft resolution takes up the points I have mentioned and expresses appreciation to the Secretary-General for his efforts to make the international community aware of the difficulties faced by Djibouti.

In conclusion, we believe this to be a well-balanced draft resolution that will surely enjoy the support of all.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset I should like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Peter Hansen, and to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs for their efforts over the past year in coordinating emergency humanitarian assistance. The Secretary-General also deserves our thanks for his useful reports on the subject.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, like other Member States, is greatly concerned over the increasing number and growing magnitude of humanitarian emergencies, which include natural as well as man-made disasters. As the Secretary-General points out in his report, in 1960 there were 1.4 million refugees globally; by 1985 the figure had risen to 11.6 million; and, currently, there are about 25 to 30 million persons who are internally displaced and in need of assistance from the international community.

These numbers of people are in addition to the many others who suffer tremendously in natural disasters. These circumstances clearly demonstrate the need for more effective and coordinated responses by the international community to disaster conditions. In this regard, we believe that the efficient, proportionate and timely provision of humanitarian assistance, while being extremely useful to mitigate the negative impacts of disaster, is not an end in itself. Natural disasters create additional pressure on the economies of the developing countries, retarding their social and economic strides towards achieving sustainable development. While countries should be encouraged to incorporate natural-disaster reduction measures in their development plans, humanitarian assistance should also be directed at addressing the underlying causes that make territories and countries vulnerable when facing natural disasters. This constitutes a renewed emphasis on an important principle of the Yokohama strategy — namely, the continuum from relief to development.

As also pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report, and as implied by present situations in some countries, sanctions can create major hardship ramifications for civilians. Therefore, there is a need for clear prior assessment of the likely impact of sanctions, including how they might affect humanitarian considerations.

My delegation attaches great importance to effective coordination between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and various agencies, such as the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Health Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations.

In this regard, we consider useful the recommendations of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee contained in the Secretary-General's report. However, regarding coordination at the field level, my delegation reiterates its position in support of General Assembly resolution 46/182, in which the responsibility in the field for humanitarian work has been clearly entrusted to the UNDP resident coordinator. The designation or appointment of a humanitarian coordinator in exceptionally complex emergency circumstances should be thoroughly studied and examined on the basis of the individual merit of each case and the gravity of the particular situation.

In general, the guide for the Department's activities should be General Assembly resolution 46/182, which clearly spells out the precepts for humanitarian assistance. These include the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, full respect for sovereignty, consent of the affected countries and full consultation and coordination with the national authorities. Furthermore, I should like to emphasize the importance of the provisions of paragraph 27 of General Assembly resolution 48/42, which calls for full consultation with the emergency relief coordinator in the overall planning of a peace-keeping operation with a humanitarian component.

Shortfalls in financial resources continue to imperil the implementation of many humanitarian programmes. Given the recent increase in the number and complexity of emergencies to which the United Nations system has been called upon to respond, it has become all the more necessary to provide adequate resources for increasing the capacity of United Nations humanitarian organizations so that the system can respond quickly and effectively to the wide range of critical short- and medium-term needs of those affected by natural disasters and emergencies. In this regard, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) has served as a predominant source of funding for United Nations agencies, in the critical initial phase of emergencies, to supplement the emergency funding capacities of these organizations. Despite the Fund's effectiveness, however, the resources available in it constitute a matter of serious concern, as acknowledged by the General Assembly in resolution 49/139 A, where it noted the need to increase the resources available in the CERF and to ensure that it maintains an adequate level at all times to respond to new emergencies.

While the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should continue to be the prime catalytic mechanism for the promotion and implementation of these strategies, it should also seek and support effective regional coordination mechanisms. This process, while putting emphasis on coordination at a regional level, entails the interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral interaction of all parties. Evidently, the first and most important step in this regard would be to identify the regional disaster-reduction and prevention potentials and to make use of them. Only when adequate disaster-reduction assistance items and authority are entrusted to these regional centres can one be assured that the United Nations system will react efficiently and in a timely fashion.

Finally, my delegation wishes to reaffirm its commitment to United Nations humanitarian assistance, as mandated in General Assembly resolutions, taking into account the principles I have underlined.

Mr. Ntonga (Cameroon) (*interpretation from French*): I should like to thank you most sincerely, Mr. Acting President, for giving my delegation the opportunity to state the views of my country, Cameroon, on the draft resolution submitted under agenda item 154, entitled "Participation of volunteers, "White Helmets", in activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development".

I note with pleasure that our task has been made easier by the wealth, clarity and accuracy of the information contained in the working documents submitted to us, in particular the report (A/50/203/Add.1) of the Secretary-General and the note (A/50/542) by the Secretariat. These documents describe how this item has evolved since the adoption on 20 December 1994 of resolution 49/139 B at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

We would like to express to the Secretary-General our satisfaction at the work accomplished.

Approved by the aforementioned resolution 49/139 B, which was adopted by consensus, the initiative on participation of volunteers, "White Helmets", has fine prospects. Indeed, because of its purposes, the initiative continues to enjoy the strong support of many

Governments, United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations.

This excellent initiative — for which the Argentine Republic should be commended — seeks to create national volunteer corps of men and women of good will to strengthen national and regional stand-by arrangements to enable them to participate in United Nations activities in the field of humanitarian emergency assistance and to promote a smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development.

As paragraph 4 of the Note by the Secretariat states, the Economic and Social Council at its 1995 substantive session demonstrated strong support for the early implementation of the "White Helmets" initiative, which it considered to be technically viable. Furthermore, the initiative was also mentioned and approved in the Declaration of the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995. Finally, according to the Secretary-General's report, several Governments have declared their readiness to cooperate in its immediate implementation or to play a role in training these national volunteer corps.

Cameroon is open to any approach and is ready to implement any initiative that can strengthen international cooperation, which is a factor for peace and development. Cameroon cannot fail to lend its full support to the "White Helmets" initiative, the aims of which are the same as those that motivate and underpin my Government's activities at the national and international levels.

Indeed, given the presence and the flow of refugees and displaced persons on our territory, and aware of the importance of international solidarity — which was manifest during the ecological catastrophe at Lake Nyos in Cameroon in 1986 — and of the need to confront unpredictable situations in an uncertain future, my Government decided to establish within Cameroon's armed forces a specialized unit for peace-keeping and humanitarian assistance operations. This specialized unit, although part of our armed forces, will include a multidisciplinary civilian component devoted to humanitarian assistance operations.

At the international level, and particularly the subregional levels, the 11 States members of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions of the Members States of the Central African Sub-Region have undertaken to participate in peace-keeping operations under the aegis of the United Nations or the Organization of African Unity and to that end to establish within their armed forces specialized units for peace-keeping and humanitarian assistance operations.

Finally, as proof of the importance we attach to this question, a training seminar for trainers in peace-keeping and humanitarian assistance operations will be held in Yaoundé during the first half of 1996. In this respect, my delegation reiterates Cameroon's eagerness and availability to organize a yearly training course in Yaoundé for all African countries.

Without prejudice to any statement my Government may make on this subject in the future, my delegation shares the views expressed in paragraphs 26, 28, 38, 40 and 41 of the Secretary-General's report, dealing respectively with areas of possible utilization of national volunteers, coordination arrangements between the United Nations and the countries concerned for the effective implementation of the initiative, and the training programme for and status and security of "White Helmets".

As to financing, my delegation takes careful note of the comment in the report that:

> "The viability of the "White Helmets" initiative is ultimately predicated on the availability of financing for their training and deployment". (*A/50/203/Add.1, para. 29*)

Given the role that national volunteers are being asked to play in the various stages of peace-keeping operations, particularly at the peace-building stage, it would therefore appear necessary, as suggested in paragraph 30 of the report, that financial resources be found through the fund-raising envisaged by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

In my delegation's opinion, the financial support of the United Nations and additional contributions from Member States, particularly the wealthier ones, are essential for the effective launching of this initiative. Because of the difficulties it is facing, Cameroon would like to benefit from this financial support for the training and deployment of national volunteers to be selected and integrated into the specialized unit for peace-keeping and humanitarian assistance operations.

In conclusion, I reiterate my Government's support for the "White Helmets" initiative, which meets the objectives defined by "An Agenda for Peace" and which,

in its operational phase, will strengthen the essential and highly appreciated activities of the Blue Helmets, United Nations volunteers and other intergovernmental and non-governmental institutions which have been working tirelessly for decades to attain the same goals.

For all these reasons, Cameroon wishes to join the list of cosponsors of draft resolution A/50/L.23, which it hopes will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Kamunanwire (Uganda): My delegation supports the statement made by the representative of the Philippines, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We also express appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/50/203 on "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations" as well as his other reports on special economic assistance to individual countries.

First, the important role played by humanitarian and disaster relief assistance cannot be underestimated. However, for it to be effective, it should be well coordinated, timely and of the right magnitude, so that it efficiently addresses the immediate needs of victims.

Secondly, emergency relief assistance should not be an end in itself. Besides addressing the immediate needs, special focus should also be devoted to the root causes of crisis situations. Take the example of internal conflicts which, among other things, result in the influx of refugees and the internal displacement of persons. As long as those conflicts persist, the situation is not conducive to the voluntary return of the victims and so the burden on both the receiving parties and the suffering communities is perpetuated. It thus becomes imperative that efforts be redoubled and resources be mobilized to address the underlying factors in crisis situations.

Thirdly, emergency and disaster relief assistance should be designed and undertaken in such a way that it is not for ever. Besides evolving durable solutions, affected countries should be assisted in building the necessary capacities and economic capabilities that would enable them to mitigate any future recurrences. In particular, on the issue of emergency assistance versus development assistance, it is the view of my delegation that while attention should be given to emergency assistance, this should not be at the expense of development assistance. Inasmuch as emergency situations call for urgent responses, by nature they are not perpetual and should therefore not unduly affect resources for development. To a very large extent, the ultimate solution to the ills and eventualities of today lies in the precepts of economic development and the soundness of economies.

My country is among those countries that evoked Article 50 of the Charter as a result of economic sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Since then, an expensive road project contracted to a Yugoslav company called Energoprojekt remains stalled half-way in addition to all associated encumbrances over the last five years.

Unfortunately, in the case of Uganda, all the previous resolutions adopted by the Assembly on special economic assistance to affected States as a result of the sanctions remain unimplemented, which calls into question the whole essence and spirit of Article 50. The balance-of-payments support by the International Monetary Fund, mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (A/50/423) addressed other pressing areas and not any mitigation as a result of the sanctions. It is our hope that the Security Council Committee on Yugoslavia will find it appropriate to address the damage so far accumulated in the spirit of Article 50 of the Charter.

Mr. Bull (Liberia): The Liberian delegation is pleased to participate in the Assembly's consideration of agenda item 20 (b), on "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions".

We offer our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his analytical and informative report entitled "Assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia", contained in document A/50/522 of 9 October 1995, which my delegation fully endorses. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs also deserves our gratitude for its diligence in sensitizing the international community to the continuing needs of the Liberian people ravaged by war.

The recent Conference on Assistance to Liberia, held in New York on 27 October 1995, is a further manifestation of the determination of the Secretary-General to obtain the active involvement of the international community in providing much needed resources for Liberia's rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. We express an appeal that those who made pledges during that meeting will shortly fulfil their

commitments, which are vital to the successful implementation of the Liberian peace process.

When the Head of the Liberian delegation to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly addressed this body on 9 October, he conveyed to the donor community the appreciation of the Government and people of Liberia for their valuable support and assistance to the country. Today, we should like to reiterate those sentiments to the international community for its continued cooperation and support.

The persistent deadlock which characterized negotiations in the Liberian peace process during nearly six years of war has now been replaced by a firm commitment to peace. As the Assembly is aware, this was realized through the signing of the Abuja Agreement on 19 August 1995 by the leaders of the various factions and their subsequent participation in a six-man Council of State. The Council's responsibilities include the disarming and demobilization of combatants, the repatriation of Liberian refugees and their resettlement, and the holding of internationally supervised executive and legislative elections on 20 August 1996.

As Liberians embrace peace, we remain grateful to the leaders of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), particularly Nigeria and Ghana, for their tireless efforts which contributed to the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement. The contributions of the Secretary-General, his Special Representative, the Organization of African Unity, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations also deserve our commendation.

The new transitional leadership which assumed office on 1 September 1995 is determined to fulfil its mandate pursuant to the Abuja Agreement. Already, the three branches of government have been duly constituted and are performing their respective duties. The Government has held bilateral talks with the neighbouring States of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone concerning the peace process and the coordination of plans for the repatriation of more than 800,000 Liberian refugees residing in those countries. The Transitional Government is also endeavouring to extend its authority throughout the country; however, this activity is directly dependent on the deployment of the ECOWAS Peace Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

Unfortunately, the appeals for support for ECOMOG by the Secretary-General and the Security Council have not sufficiently satisfied the logistical and other requirements for ECOMOG's full deployment. This situation could adversely affect the important gains made so far by the Liberian parties.

This delegation has always advocated that as Liberia emerges from a state of war emphasis should shift from relief to capacity-building as one of the means of encouraging development activities in the country. There must be a "continuum from relief to development" if the goals of sustainable development, including the restoration of productive capacities in Liberia, are to be achieved. We are therefore pleased that the Secretary-General's report on Liberia has identified several sectoral programmes — health and medical care, food and nutrition, education and training, agriculture and forestry, and water supply, among others - that are receiving assistance in an effort to help build the capacities of the Liberian authorities in assuming responsibility for the recovery process.

During the pledging conference on assistance to Liberia, the Transitional Government issued a complementary appeal document that identified several sectoral programmes, as well as those for the reintegration of ex-combatants and the resettlement of refugees and displaced persons, as requiring priority assistance. My Government believes that providing assistance to these areas will lay the foundation for sustainable peace and help to facilitate the rebuilding of the country.

In this connection, we wish to reiterate the request for assistance made by the Secretary-General for the programmes identified in his report and for those presented by the Transitional Government during the pledging conference.

We are heartened by the Secretary-General's decision to visit Liberia on 30 November to identify with the Liberian people and to personally assess the progress made so far in the implementation of the Abuja Agreement, widely acknowledged as the last hope for peace in Liberia. The Government and people of Liberia consider the visit timely, particularly since it will be on the eve of the commencement of the disarmament and demobilization of combatants, pursuant to the Abuja Agreement. The Secretary-General's visit will be a tremendous source of encouragement to the Liberian people and a clear indication of his commitment and that of the international community to the attainment of lasting peace in Liberia.

Since the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the Liberian delegation, through the African Group, has proposed a draft resolution requesting assistance for Liberia. This year's draft resolution, contained in document A/50/L.27, highlights the very encouraging developments in the country and the areas of priority need. We therefore request that the draft resolution be adopted by consensus, as similar draft resolutions have been in the past.

The Liberian peace process has entered a critical phase. While we are mindful that the primary responsibility for maintaining peace rests with the Liberian people, it is our fervent hope that the international community will continue to lend its support to our efforts to achieve sustained peace and democratic governance in Liberia.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): It is with great pleasure that I take part in today's discussion on the field of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations.

At the outset, I should like to express our gratitude to the courageous individuals working in the humanitarian aid community, who have dedicated their lives to disaster assistance. We pay special tribute to the United Nations departments and agencies, which have, in the face of various constraints, achieved substantial progress in successfully harmonizing and channelling the efforts of the international community in the field of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance.

When we speak of the United Nations efforts in the field of relief assistance, the primary role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs cannot be overemphasized. At the same time, we would like to recognize the valuable contributions of other United Nations agencies, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), for their vigorous initiatives and efforts in this field.

Furthermore, my delegation would like to note the usefulness and effectiveness of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, in which non-governmental organizations participate; the operation of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, which facilitates a timely response to emergencies; and the consolidated inter-agency humanitarian assistance appeals process, which advances cooperation and coordination between relevant United Nations agencies.

In this vein, my delegation would like to comment on some points related to the coordination mechanism in the United Nations system.

First, we are of the view that effective coordination should be based on a clear mandate, which would be supported by the clear division of labour in the United Nations system. At present, there are still overlapping or duplicative mandates and responsibilities among the relevant United Nations agencies engaged in emergency humanitarian assistance. This overlap is partly attributable to the urgent nature of a situation that requires a rapid response or to the intrinsic nature of humanitarian assistance, which entails a continuum from immediate relief to reconstruction, rehabilitation and development. Bearing in mind these problems, my delegation calls for greater efforts and investment to be made to streamline and rationalize the effective division of labour among various United Nations agencies.

Secondly, a regular consultation mechanism should be formalized and given further substance in order to strengthen coordination between relevant United Nations agencies. We would like to suggest the further utilization of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

By the same token, we believe that greater consultative mechanisms are needed to facilitate and further improve the relationship between the United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions. Such mechanisms will surely contribute to streamlining the process of interlinking humanitarian assistance and mid- or long-term development programmes. My delegation would like to note the usefulness of the development programme, which will eventually buttress the stable and sustainable foundation for the objective of overall humanitarian assistance by assisting indigenous capacity-building.

Thirdly, it is our view that heightened attention should be given to promotion of the participation and maximum utilization of the private sector, including non-governmental organizations at the national, regional and international levels. In its efforts to assist Rwanda and Somalia, my Government has witnessed firsthand the benefits of mobilizing the private sector. Among the major factors which have contributed to the success of the mobilization are the mass media, which provide on-

the-spot coverage of a given emergency situation. My delegation considers that the effective mobilization and utilization of the private sector and mass media would contribute significantly to the easing of the capacity and resource problems which the international community is now facing in the field of humanitarian assistance.

In this connection, we would like to support the maximum possible utilization of the "White Helmet" initiative in the field of relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development. My delegation believes that it is important to highlight the volunteer spirit of service and partnership, which can play a vital role in bringing about global support through public action and cross-national campaigns. We therefore support and are co-sponsoring the draft resolution on the initiative.

Fourthly, my delegation calls on the international community to take every possible measure to ensure the security and safety of those individuals who are engaged in humanitarian assistance activities. My delegation condemns actions such as taking humanitarian assistance workers hostage as a means to achieve political or military objectives. Furthermore, as recommended in the Secretary-General's report, it is incumbent upon all Member States to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law by taking appropriate action against those who violate fundamental humanitarian norms.

Finally, in view of the importance of early warning and preparedness in preventing and mitigating natural disaster, my delegation would like to support the strengthening of the relationship between various actors, including the relevant United Nations agencies, international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Given that humanitarian relief assistance and peace-keeping activities are inseparably interlinked and mutually reinforcing, it is critical for peace-keeping operations and humanitarian relief assistance to keep each other fully abreast of the other's activities in all phases of emergency situations. In this light, I would like to draw attention to the necessity for close cooperation and coordination between relevant departments of the United Nations, such as the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations. Cooperation and coordination between the three departments is integral to enhancing the effectiveness of current emergency humanitarian relief assistance.

With particular reference to the Note by the Secretary-General (A/50/572) transmitting the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Investigation of the relationship between humanitarian assistance and peace-keeping operations" (JIU/REP/95/6), my delegation would like to request the Secretary-General to take substantive and detailed action for the further enhancement of coordination between the relevant departments.

In closing, I would like to reiterate the Republic of Korea's firm commitment to the cause of international humanitarian relief assistance and to the efforts being made.

Mr. Maruyama (Japan): Both in number and in scale, the humanitarian crises that have beset the world in the past few years have been unprecedented. In Iraq, Somalia, the Great Lakes region, and the former Yugoslavia, the international community has laboured to provide assistance under the most difficult conditions, and in my opinion it has acquitted itself well. Humanitarian and other organizations, both within and outside the United Nations system, have shown tremendous courage and determination, and they have succeeded to a surprising degree in relieving human misery. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to pay tribute to every individual involved in those efforts.

The crises we have weathered and the manner in which we have done so, however, have highlighted the urgency of strengthening our emergency response capability. Since humanitarian organizations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have expertise on which we should continue to draw, this can be done in large part by improving coordination and cooperation between them. My delegation therefore welcomes and supports the resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council last July urging the governing bodies of humanitarian organizations of the United Nations system to review those issues which relate to the role and operational responsibilities as well as the operative and financial capabilities of their respective organizations. It is our hope that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs will play a central role in following up this resolution by convening regular, informal, and open informational meetings, so as to ensure that this review progresses at a proper pace.

My delegation also would like to see the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) reinforce its function as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination under the Emergency Relief Coordinator. In accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly on this subject in recent years, IASC should convene frequent meetings to deal with administrative, technical, and policy issues. Specifically, it should consider such matters as the response to complex emergencies, treatment of internally displaced persons, a funding strategy for humanitarian activities, the safety of humanitarian assistance personnel, and the "continuum". In this connection, my delegation welcomes the initiative taken by IASC in developing the procedures for the selection and appointment of regional humanitarian coordinators, which has led to the appointments of humanitarian coordinators in Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Somalia. It is the belief of my delegation that the coordination of humanitarian assistance activities at the field level can be carried out most effectively by a regional humanitarian coordinator who is designated from among the most qualified persons representing the various humanitarian agencies involved in a given situation.

My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report, which it read with great interest. Japan shares the Secretary-General's concern about the safety of personnel engaged in humanitarian assistance activities. Last year, at its forty-ninth session, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel in order to ensure the smooth implementation of United Nations activities. I appeal to all other Member States to accept the Convention as quickly as possible, as Japan did in July of this year, as the second signatory. It is, however, to be noted that the Convention does not automatically cover humanitarian assistance activities. According to article 1 (*c*), it applies to those operations whose purpose is the maintenance or restoration of international peace and security, and to those where the Security Council or the General Assembly has declared for the purposes of the Convention that there exists an exceptional risk to the safety of participating personnel. Because my delegation believes that it is vital that the Convention be applied as widely as possible and that it extend in particular to personnel engaged in providing humanitarian assistance, we would like to propose that the Security Council or the General Assembly make the declaration of an "exceptional risk" more automatic and customary.

In his report, the Secretary-General also points out the importance of rehabilitation and confidence-building measures in a post-conflict period, and recommends that a separate window with an additional $30 million be opened within the Central Emergency Revolving Fund to act as a catalyst for such activities. My delegation agrees that there must be a smooth transition from emergency relief to rehabilitation and development. However, this is very much a part of the development process, and could be implemented more effectively by international development organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, given their expertise and the resources at their disposal. It is therefore essential to establish close cooperative relations between humanitarian organizations and such development agencies so that the operations of those agencies can proceed in a coordinated manner, beginning as soon as a conflict ends. The Secretary-General's recommendation that a second window be established in the Central Emergency Revolving Fund should be considered in that light.

In concluding my remarks, I would like to reiterate that Japan will continue to do its utmost to alleviate the suffering of people around the world, responding to both complex emergencies and natural disasters, as it has in the past, through humanitarian organizations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme, the International Organization for Migration and the International Committee of the Red Cross, and on a bilateral basis.

Mr. Kenik (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): Twenty-six April 1996 will mark the tenth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, whose catastrophic consequences are of truly global magnitude. For nearly 10 years the world community has gradually come to understand, and for many years to come will continue to learn, the bitter lessons of one of the most tragic events of the twentieth century. For all these years the international community has gradually been learning Chernobyl's true consequences for Belarus.

International research carried out with the participation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has shown irrefutably the unprecedented radiological and ecological damage inflicted on the Republic of Belarus. The data presented at the international conference on the future of nuclear energy after Chernobyl, held at Paris in 1991 under the auspices of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), five years after the accident, showed that post-Chernobyl radiation doses for the

population of the Republic of Belarus are the highest in the world.

The Government of the Republic of Belarus is concerned about the continuing increase in cases of a number of thyroid diseases. The very alarming data in this connection have been confirmed in the report of a World Health Organization fact-finding mission.

The International Conference on the Health Consequences of Chernobyl and Other Radiological Accidents, held at Geneva from 20 to 23 November 1995, again confirmed the long-term impact of the Chernobyl disaster on the health of the population of the Republic of Belarus and the need to involve the world community in solving the whole range of post-Chernobyl problems.

The effects of Chernobyl are a decisive factor in all spheres of life in the Republic of Belarus, for the present generation and for many generations to come. Our country is still forced to allocate approximately one quarter of its national income to mitigating the consequences of the disaster. Even the special 12 per cent "Chernobyl tax" cannot compensate for the lack of resources to finance current programmes to deal with the consequences of the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Anxiety about the health and future life of our children creates additional tension in society. It also seriously impedes the progress of economic reforms and the creation of market structures in our country.

The revised edition of our national report, entitled "Republic of Belarus: Nine Years After Chernobyl — Situation, Problems, Action", gives a more detailed account of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and of our own and international efforts to overcome these consequences. Copies of the report are available to delegations.

Owing mainly to our bitter post-Chernobyl experience, we have come to understand the need to recognize the principles of collective security and collective responsibility in cooperation to prevent technological disasters. We appeal again to the international community to turn its attention to preventive measures such as the elaboration and implementation of measures to ensure the safety of existing nuclear reactors and the prevention of the effects of radiological incidents on distant ecosystems and people. In our view, special responsibility lies with countries and organizations that use nuclear energy and promote its peaceful uses. In this connection, we welcome the commitment made by Member States in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, adopted on 24 October 1995, to intensify cooperation to mitigate the effects of major technological and man-made disasters, and in the areas of disaster relief, post-disaster rehabilitation and humanitarian assistance, in order to enhance the ability of affected countries to cope with such situations.

The Secretary-General rightly notes in his report on agenda item 20 (c) that

> "Chernobyl signifies the reality of a prolonged humanitarian disaster of major proportions" (*A/50/418, para. 1*)

and that

> "a humanitarian tragedy of international magnitude ... can only be addressed through a strong and consistent international response". (*para. 80*)

As we evaluate the effectiveness of the international response, including the activities of the United Nations, we are obliged to say frankly that we in Belarus have ambiguous feelings. On one hand, we are grateful for the international support and assistance to the affected people provided in recent years. On the other hand, we feel a certain disappointment at the incomplete fulfilment of the mandates of the four consecutive consensus resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, resolutions 45/190, 46/150, 47/165 and 48/206. Unfortunately we are obliged to say that there has been incomplete use of the potential of the United Nations as a catalyst and in other ways, and of its information and incentive capabilities, to enhance cooperation and effective coordination of efforts in studying, mitigating and minimizing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

We appreciate the contribution of a number of Member States and organizations of the United Nations system, especially the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), to the development of long-term cooperation to mitigate and minimize the after-effects of the Chernobyl disaster. We also appreciate the work of other organizations, including regional organizations, and bilateral activities, particularly those of non-governmental

organizations, which have provided and are continuing to provide humanitarian assistance directly to the people affected, especially children, and we hope that these humanitarian efforts will continue.

At the same time, it is clear that the magnitude of the Chernobyl disaster in terms of a humanitarian tragedy, especially in the present economic and social context, has given rise to new and additional problems of general concern which, if they are to be resolved, require the establishment of broad-based and active international cooperation and the coordination of efforts in this sphere at the national and international levels. The problems of the Chernobyl refugees, the state of health of the people who helped to localize and eliminate the effects of the accident at the Chernobyl plant, the increase and spread of cancer and other diseases, particularly among children, are compounded by the economic difficulties of the complex period of transformation in Belarus.

We are convinced that the diverse assistance rendered to Belarus, Ukraine and Russia is not charity, all the worse so as it is gradually assuming the form of mutually advantageous cooperation, particularly in the area of research into the after-effects of Chernobyl. This is not just because a significant amount of factual and in many respects unique material, both on the effects of radiation and on measures to counter its harmful influence, including social rehabilitation measures, has been accumulated in Belarus. Clearly, the continued participation of the international scientific community in collecting and elaborating these priceless data and analysing the findings of our scientists would benefit mankind as a whole.

In this respect, it is clear that such traditional concepts as "donor" and "recipient" with regard to cooperation on Chernobyl and related matters will undergo further objective changes. In particular, this is borne out, *inter alia*, by the bilateral and multilateral agreements concluded between the States affected by the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and a number of other United Nations Member States, including Germany, Japan, the United States of America, and the agreements with intergovernmental organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as well as regional organizations, including the European Commission.

Experience of practical work in the framework of existing agreements between the three most affected States and WHO, the European Commission, UNESCO and other joint bilateral and international projects, for example, clearly shows the potential for new approaches to international cooperation on Chernobyl on a different footing to the past. We also hope that international efforts within the framework of bilateral Chernobyl cooperation with the three newly independent States will become more active.

The Republic of Belarus also believes that the resumption in Ukraine of the work of the International Scientific and Technological Centre for Nuclear and Radiological Accidents, with the participation of IAEA, will give greater opportunity for international collaboration to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of such accidents. We are ready, especially in the interests of the peoples of all three States most seriously affected by Chernobyl, to take part in the activities of the Centre on the basis of mutually acceptable principles. We also suggest that international projects and programmes implemented in the Polessky radioactive ecology reserve, which includes part of the contaminated areas of Belarus, Ukraine and the Russian Federation, should be continued, as should other international research projects on the basis of joint financing, setting aside the

> "ambivalence of the international community" (*A/50/418, para. 1*)

referred to in the Secretary-General's report.

The objective and critical analysis of existing activities and the list of constructive proposals and recommendations with regard to possible subsequent measures in the report of Secretary-General could provide a sound basis for future United Nations efforts and broad-based international assistance to the affected countries at the intergovernmental and non-governmental levels, with a view to mobilizing not only humanitarian organizations and the international scientific community, but also business circles and the national development potential of the affected States.

As the Assembly knows, the regular expanded meeting of the Quadripartite Committee for Coordination on Chernobyl, which is open to the participation of all interested countries and international organizations and institutions, will be held on 29 November 1995. The agenda of this meeting includes very important issues related to monitoring the relevant activities of the international community and the coordination of preparatory work for the forthcoming unhappy date of the tenth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. Our

delegation is convinced that the tenth anniversary of Chernobyl could become a distinctive year of international solidarity with the victims of Chernobyl. In particular, Belarus hopes that the crisis in resources to support international projects and programmes related to Chernobyl, particularly within WHO, will be remedied. In this regard, the delegations which have co-sponsored draft resolution A/50/L.26 hope that the General Assembly will support our appeal to Member States, in particular donor States, relevant multilateral financial institutions and other concerned parties of the international community, including non-governmental organizations, to continue to provide international support to the ongoing efforts made by Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine to cope with the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, and our request to the Secretary-General to appeal to Member States to intensify such assistance. We also count on the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Public Information to make a constructive contribution in providing information on Chernobyl initiatives and measures now being prepared both at the national level in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, as well as in Vienna, Geneva, New York and Paris with the participation of organizations of the United Nations system and other governmental and non-governmental organizations.

In conclusion, I wish to assure the Assembly that in the later stages of our work, both during the meeting of the Quadripartite Committee already mentioned, involving the representatives of the Governments of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Hansen, and in the consultations on draft resolution A/50/L.26, the delegation of Belarus will work actively with all delegations in order to achieve international consensus in the interests of the people who suffered from the Chernobyl catastrophe.

Mrs. Deori (India): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for the reports under discussion today. While associating itself with the views put forward earlier by the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77, my delegation would like to make some additional points on this important agenda item.

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has come a long way since its establishment pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182, strengthened by landmark resolutions such as 47/168, 48/57 and 48/162 which have sought to coordinate activity on this very complex item. One of the greatest challenges has been the readjustment of the role of the Organization, from one of humanitarian activity coordination into one that can respond to several complex emergencies, unsupported by commensurate resources. The challenge has been great indeed for Member States in ensuring that the guidelines laid out in the landmark resolution 46/182 are being followed, and that the separate and clear mandates of coordinating bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), are kept distinct and focused during coordinated activities for humanitarian emergencies.

My delegation recognizes the overriding importance of effective coordination and the need for innovative thinking in trying to come to grips with the gravity and complexity of situations on the ground, especially when there is uncertainty about resources. The report argues for the strengthening of innovative mechanisms, both to enhance the core capacity of relief operations and to identify new means of responding to unprecedented needs. Any new initiatives or innovative concepts, however, will need to ensure that the Department's actions are in accordance with the clear mandates established by the General Assembly.

We should like at this point to re-emphasize that the principles agreed intergovernmentally in several forums over a period of time include the following: humanity, neutrality, impartiality, full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States, the primary importance of the consent and appeals of affected countries and, finally, the primacy of the role of an affected State in the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory. My delegation will support all humanitarian activities under the United Nations umbrella within these specified parameters.

The report makes several recommendations. My delegation is aware of the gravity of the responsibilities vested in the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and it understands the prevailing anxiousness to strengthen the Department organizationally. We also understand the importance of safeguarding the security of humanitarian personnel on the ground. Some of the recommendations, however, relate to such matters as preventive diplomacy

and United Nations peacemaking activities. As these are at various stages of discussion between Member States, specific recommendations at this point could have the unintended effect of prejudging the issues.

My delegation also has reservations about proposals involving the diversion of resources from the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) — either principal or interest — for any administrative requirement, such as initial security arrangements, especially as we still do not have a satisfactory CERF accounting procedure in place. We believe that there should be more intergovernmental discussions before such far-reaching recommendations are implemented.

My delegation noted the exhortation to Member States to take account of the larger context within which humanitarian assistance is provided, in order to ensure greater coherence in the direction of the governing bodies of the United Nations specialized agencies and bodies. This is a valid exhortation, but what is urged is already being implemented by Member countries.

The direction of the governing bodies of the specialized agencies and funds is comprehensive. However, there is a deficiency that needs to be addressed urgently: the problem of the resistance of the specialized agencies and bodies to a coordinated and disciplined allocation of their duties in accordance with their mandates. Such an allocation, as well as making assistance more effective, could result in optimum use of scarce resources. While welcoming the consolidated-appeals approach in this regard, we wish to reiterate the need to respect the requirements of the countries concerned — the element of consent — before such activities are embarked upon.

My delegation agrees that it is important that the rehabilitation and development segments be strengthened. However, as these are new concepts, there is a need for strengthening and clarification through intergovernmental discussion. Many countries have long experience in rehabilitation and development, experience from which the United Nations system could benefit if procedures were put in place following intergovernmental discussions.

In this connection, we welcome the recommendation that indigenous capacities and local mechanisms should be strengthened. My delegation recalls that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has already been given a mandate to undertake such a strengthening of national capacity in any area where the host Government feels it to be necessary. It should also be pointed out that in the new UNDP procedures that have been agreed to intergovernmentally there is a third category of resources — those allocated specifically to countries with special needs, including emergency needs. Duplication should be avoided in the activities of the various United Nations agencies.

An allocation from the Central Emergency Revolving Fund is again being recommended for this purpose. Developing countries have already given up a portion of their indicative planning figure resource entitlement, under UNDP line 1.1.3, for precisely such emergency requirements. The allocation of funds for emergencies should not become an open-ended process in the case of all agencies, as that would not be fair to recipient countries already reeling under a serious crunch on resources for development activities. Such uncoordinated recommendations from the United Nations system are the surest prescription for squandering scarce United Nations funds for development.

My delegation also feels that the Secretariat's recommendation that donors earmark a portion of their contributions for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is, at best, highly inappropriate and militates against the universal and voluntary nature of such contributions that Member States have been seeking, in various forums, to re-establish.

My delegation would like to comment briefly on the "White Helmets" initiative of Argentina, which we have found to be within the existing United Nations framework and have consequently supported. We see this initiative as being supportive of and supplementary to the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Volunteers.

In conclusion, we should like to reiterate that the gravity of humanitarian emergencies should not be allowed to blur functional distinctions between the various United Nations agencies or to override the requirements, desires or wishes of sovereign Governments. We should not succumb to the temptation of letting ourselves be carried away by the present and whittling down the sagacity of the past, as that could only result in a confused future.

We need clear distinctions when defining the relationships between the functions and imperatives of peace-keeping and peacemaking and the principles of humanitarian access, which are primarily neutrality, impartiality and the consent of the affected State. The

distinctions are fine but none the less relevant, valid and crucial. My delegation will continue to support all United Nations efforts in the area of humanitarian assistance that are mandated by General Assembly resolutions and by intergovernmental decisions.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I should like to inform the Assembly that the representative of Madagascar has requested to participate in the debate on this agenda item. As the list of speakers was closed at 4.30 p.m. yesterday, I shall ask the Assembly if there is any objection to the inclusion of that delegation in the list of speakers.

As I hear no objection, Madagascar is to be included in the list of speakers.

Mr. Junejo (Pakistan): Allow me to express my delegation's appreciation for the Secretary-General's report (A/50/203 and Add.1) on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. The report correctly presents the issue of humanitarian assistance in its overall political context. It thereby succeeds in identifying the major problems being faced by the international community in the area of humanitarian assistance and in focusing attention on the measures that are required to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations in this field.

In recent years, the international community has been confronted with an increasing number of humanitarian crises. These crises have resulted mainly from man-made conflict situations and not from natural disasters. Almost 50 conflicts are being waged in different parts of the world today. These conflicts have certain defining features: First, their victims are primarily civilians, with women and children bearing the brunt of fighting. Secondly, the people caught in these situations are often subjected to the most horrendous violations of their human rights. Women are subjected to rape and sexual abuse. Young men are ruthlessly tortured and executed. Entire families are forced to leave their homes and seek refuge, either as internally displaced persons or as refugees in foreign lands. Thirdly, as pointed out in the Secretary-General's report:

> "the suffering endured by civilians is not an incidental element of political and military strategies but constitutes its major objective." *(A/50/203, para. 11)*

The aim is to terrorize opponents into submission. In the process, humanitarian law is flouted with impunity. Fourthly, in many of these situations either humanitarian agencies are denied access to the conflict areas or their ability to provide humanitarian assistance is severely constrained. All these elements have been fully evident in the crises in Rwanda, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

In occupied Kashmir the situation has a unique dimension. The Indian Government itself is the cause of the crisis. Indian armed forces have unleashed a reign of terror on defenceless civilians. In an effort to break the morale of the Kashmiri resistance, Indian troops have deliberately targeted women and children. Incidents of mass rape and sexual abuse have become a matter of routine and are well documented. Indeed, this has been documented in repeated reports of respected human-rights organizations.

A recent egregious violation of humanitarian norms by the Indian forces is the blockade of the Neelam Valley in Azad Kashmir. Road links to the Neelam Valley in Azad Kashmir have been cut off by frequent firing by Indian forces across the Line of Control. The bulk of the relief supplies to the people in the Neelam Valley have to be air-dropped. With the onset of winter, the alternative road constructed for sending supplies has been blocked. As a result, some 100,000 residents of the Valley are facing a grave humanitarian crisis.

In the context of conflicts, a focus on provision of humanitarian assistance alone is not going to be of much help to the affected populations. Measures need to be taken in four critical areas.

First, and above all, the international community must address the underlying causes of the conflicts if the sufferings of the affected people are to be brought to an end. We are in complete agreement with the Secretary-General that

> "The provision of humanitarian assistance in a vacuum is tantamount to managing only the symptoms of a crisis. Experience shows that, in most instances, the effectiveness of humanitarian endeavors in conflict settings is largely predicated on successful action by the international community to resolve the problems that provoked the crisis." *(ibid., para. 16)*

Secondly, while conflicts are going on strict compliance with international humanitarian law must be ensured. In this regard, we fully endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation that

> "in accordance with the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, Member States should use their influence with parties to an armed conflict to strengthen compliance with international humanitarian law and respect for the activities undertaken by impartial humanitarian organizations such as the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross]." *(ibid., para. 157)*

We are also heartened by the intention of the Secretary-General to make compliance with humanitarian law a central focus of United Nations activities.

Thirdly, those responsible for violations of humanitarian law should be held accountable for their crimes. Perpetrators of such crimes should realize that they shall not be able to escape the consequences of their actions. Establishment of international tribunals to prosecute violators of humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda are a most welcome development. Similar tribunals should be established to prosecute elements engaged in gross violations of human rights elsewhere.

Finally, the strengthening of the United Nations machinery to deal with humanitarian crises needs close consideration. In this regard we would like to support certain steps that are being taken. We welcome the focus of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs on five broad areas, particularly on the need to ensure compliance with humanitarian law. We also appreciate the efforts of the Department to involve all relevant entities in emergency coordination activities. The invitations extended to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General's representative for internally displaced persons to attend the Inter-Agency Standing Committees meetings are steps in the right direction.

The effectiveness of the United Nations humanitarian assistance machinery is to a great extent dependent on the level of funding it receives. The role of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund is critical to the ability of the United Nations to mount a rapid, coordinated response to emergencies. It is a matter of concern that the United Nations is facing difficulties in maintaining the Fund at the minimum level of $50 million. We would, therefore, support the Secretary-General's recommendation that Member States respond favourably to replenishing the Fund to cover advances that have been outstanding for more than a year. In regard to funding, we would also favour consideration of measures to provide extrabudgetary support to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs on a continued and assured basis. The Department remains the key coordinator within the international humanitarian system, and its activities would suffer if it were constrained to operate within its limited regular budget funding.

The humanitarian crises engendered by armed conflicts should be addressed in all their dimensions. The provision of immediate relief and rehabilitation assistance is one aspect of these crises. The other aspect, to which the international community needs to give greater attention, is the resolution of the underlying causes of these crises. Unless these causes are addressed and resolved, the victims of the humanitarian crises will not be assured of a lasting solution to their tragic predicament.

Mr. Yuan Shaofu (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his reports submitted to the General Assembly at this session on the items entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance" and "Participation of volunteers, 'White Helmets', in activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development". We have also taken note with appreciation of the unremitting efforts made by Under-Secretary-General Peter Hansen and, under his leadership, by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in the field of emergency humanitarian assistance over the past year.

The Chinese delegation would like to take this opportunity to state its views on some aspects of the items under consideration. The Chinese delegation is very much concerned about emergency humanitarian assistance and attaches great importance to and supports the central role played by the United Nations in coordinating various assistance activities. Amid mounting calls for emergency assistance, as a result of frequent natural and man-made disasters in recent years, the United Nations organs and agencies in charge of humanitarian assistance are confronted with formidable and unprecedented challenges. Therefore, how to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations system so as to ensure both a more rapid and effective response and the transition from relief assistance to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development constitute an important question that needs to be addressed vigorously.

The Chinese delegation believes that in order for the United Nations to enhance its capacity to coordinate various humanitarian assistance activities and provide a rapid and effective response to disasters, it is crucial that the United Nations be well funded. However, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund established by a General Assembly resolution is suffering from dwindling resources, which gravely impairs the capacity of the United Nations to respond rapidly to the need for emergency humanitarian assistance and to play its central coordinating role. Therefore, the pressing task now is to increase donations to the Fund as soon as possible; the developed countries should fulfil their commitments by increasing their donations to the Fund.

The Chinese delegation wishes to reiterate here that the basic principles governing humanitarian assistance, as set out in General Assembly resolution 46/182 — namely, humanitarianism, neutrality, equity and the absence of political conditions — should be fully respected and implemented. Furthermore, the Chinese delegation wishes to express its concern for the security of personnel carrying out relief assistance in war-torn countries. We hope that the United Nations system and States concerned will, in accordance with the principles of international law and the norms governing State relations, provide the necessary protection to humanitarian relief workers so that they can operate in safety.

China is a developing country, and also a disaster-prone one. We are acutely aware that disasters cause suffering in people's lives, losses to their production and damage to society and the economy. Therefore, the Chinese Government and people deeply sympathize with affected countries for their plight and actively provide them with relief assistance within our means in response to calls contained in the relevant United Nations resolutions. The Chinese delegation fully endorses and supports the United Nations in its provision of special economic assistance to Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, the Sudan, Somalia and Rwanda.

It has been nine years since the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. The Chinese delegation wishes to express its deep sympathy to Belarus, Russia and Ukraine and to the people of those three countries for their prolonged suffering caused by the disaster and its aftermath. We note with appreciation the Government of Ukraine's political decision that it may close the nuclear power plant in the year 2000. We also support the efforts of those three countries to strengthen international coordination and cooperation, with a view to studying, alleviating and reducing as much as possible the consequences of that disaster. It is our hope that the international community, particularly the countries in a position to do so, and international financial institutions will actively cooperate with them in the fields of finance, science and technology.

The initiative to establish "White Helmets", pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/139 B and Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/44, has attracted widespread interest. It is the view of the Chinese delegation that "White Helmets" play an important complementary role in and contribute to the strengthening of the developing countries' reserve capacity and the efforts of the United Nations in the fields of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development. In order for the "White Helmets" to carry out their activities smoothly and effectively, the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs should take necessary measures to coordinate effectively the roles and activities of the "White Helmets", the United Nations system and other international organizations.

To conclude, the Chinese delegation wishes to point out that in establishing "White Helmets" in developing countries, the principle of voluntarism should be adhered to.

Mr. Islam (Bangladesh): I am privileged to speak on this important agenda item on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Peter Hansen, for the commendable work that he has undertaken under very difficult circumstances. The Secretary-General deserves our thanks for his useful reports on the subject. My delegation fully shares the views expressed by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The high incidence of natural and man-made disasters and the increase in civil and ethnic strife in recent times have demonstrated the need for a more effective and coordinated response by the international community. Appropriate and prompt responses to emergency situations are essential to assist victims, defuse tension and create a climate conducive to the resolution of crisis situations.

It is all the more important to identify and address the root causes of emergencies. Otherwise, the recurrence

of emergencies cannot be prevented, and States will not be able to grow out of a relief-dependency syndrome. It is therefore important that the transition from relief to rehabilitation and long-term sustainable development programmes be ensured.

The interrelationship of humanitarian activities and those having to do with peacemaking and peace-keeping is becoming increasingly evident. The delivery of humanitarian assistance has indeed become a vital part of United Nations peacemaking and peace-keeping endeavours. However, in formulating its humanitarian response to complex emergencies, the United Nations must ensure that the humanitarian aspect is not overtaken by political considerations. Bangladesh believes that humanitarian diplomacy, as conceptualized and carried out by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, forms an important part of preventive diplomacy.

The security of humanitarian personnel remains a serious problem. The tasks of humanitarian relief personnel in many areas of the world have become increasingly difficult in recent months. Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure the safety and security of personnel engaged in humanitarian relief work. The international community must demonstrate its determination to enforce the rule of law and to hold accountable those who are responsible for violating such laws. The Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel must be fully respected by all parties in the field.

Since it was created, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) has been used in a number of emergency situations, with encouraging results. With increasing demands on the Fund, due to the proliferation and magnitude of crisis situations, as well as to some delay in replenishing the Fund, we feel that it is time to address seriously the issue of increasing CERF resources. We support the recommendation to set up a separate window within the CERF for rehabilitation and confidence-building measures. The scope of the Fund can be expanded to facilitate the provision of emergency assistance in the case of protracted emergencies.

The consolidated appeals process, which was envisaged as a mechanism to promote integrated needs assessment and greater prioritization in mobilizing financial resources, has proved useful. Additional funding, however, remains crucial to meeting the demands of critical emergency situations. Field-level cooperation must be strengthened and joint programming has to be developed for the further success of the consolidated appeals process and to facilitate prompt donor response.

Given the magnitude and variety of crisis situations, my delegation fully supports the idea of stand-by arrangements with donor Governments and stockpiles of equipment and relief supplies. The idea of "White Helmets", as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 49/139 B, participating in the activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development is extremely relevant in this regard. The "White Helmets" initiative can draw important lessons from the experience of United Nations Volunteer programmes (UNV). The Department of Humanitarian Affairs and UNV can coordinate and guide the "White Helmets" initiative. My delegation also believes that this initiative has the potential to strengthen South-South cooperation and contribute to national operational capacities. Many of the ideas contained in the report of the Secretary-General regarding the "White Helmets" are useful and deserve our special consideration.

The recent increase in the number of natural disasters and the consequent damage to the economies of the countries concerned needs the urgent attention of the international community. Natural disasters cause serious damage to countries irrespective of their level of development. However, the vulnerability of the developing countries to natural disasters and their recurrence is a matter of great concern. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has a special responsibility in this regard. Developing countries suffer more and damage to their economies is greater because of their weaker infrastructures and low capacity to respond immediately and effectively to disaster situations. As is rightly observed in the Secretary-General's report, the impact of natural disasters is 20 times greater in poorer countries than in industrialized settings. International solidarity is therefore essential to reduce the consequences of natural calamities in the developing countries.

In many cases, population pressures and poverty have led people to live in areas already exposed to natural and man-made hazards. Therefore, the broader problems of poverty, population- growth rate and so on should be addressed in an integrated and urgent manner in order to prevent or limit the consequences of disasters. Mitigation measures, including disaster preparedness and early-warning systems, should be built into development programmes and be an integral part of the continuum

from disaster to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. Disaster-prone countries must at the same time be provided with the necessary resources and technical know-how to strengthen their preventive and mitigation capacities.

The collection and dissemination of information and United Nations systems for early warning of natural disasters have to be further strengthened. It is to be noted that the impact of natural disasters is felt most during the first two or three days. Any delay in reaching the affected people may cause thousands of deaths. Therefore, the prompt dispatch of United Nations disaster-assessment and coordination stand-by teams and the necessary resources is crucial.

My delegation would like to commend the work of the office of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva in the field of natural-disaster relief assistance. There is a need to enhance the indigenous capacities of Member States to face natural disasters effectively. The United Nations can further help disaster-prone countries to develop disaster-mitigation programmes and early-warning systems. Bangladesh would be happy to share its own experience in handling natural disasters with disaster-prone countries or United Nations agencies.

We feel that sustained efforts should be made to support the strengthening of the capacities of vulnerable countries and to promote the transfer of technology and information exchange. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs/United Nations Development Programme disaster-management training programme facilitates such national capacity-building for all phases of emergency management. Disaster-prone countries should receive priority in all training programmes.

Bangladesh feels that the coordination of United Nations emergency relief assistance can be more effective if it is synchronized with national relief efforts by taking into account their needs and priorities. This could be ensured through the proper integration of United Nations relief operations with those mounted by national authorities. National experiences and capacities are to be taken into account in dealing with special and recurrent emergencies. In this context, United Nations field agencies should work in close cooperation with national agencies.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that the United Nations is best equipped to play a central role in providing and coordinating humanitarian assistance, taking into account the principles of impartiality, neutrality and transparency which form the basis of United Nations operations.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on agenda item 20, "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance", on behalf of the 13 States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which are members of the United Nations, namely Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and my own country, Jamaica.

The CARICOM countries wish, first of all, to associate themselves with the statement made on this item by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We wish to thank the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report contained in documents A/50/203 and A/50/203/Add.1, in which he recognizes the progress that has been made in strengthening coordination and cooperation among the organizations of the United Nations system and other governmental and non-governmental partners in the area of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. Admittedly, with the onslaught of sudden crises and the proliferation of natural and other man-made disasters, new challenges and competing needs have repeatedly highlighted the importance of establishing a well-organized and adequately financed mechanism for coordination, both within the multi-actor humanitarian arena and with other elements of the international system involved in crisis management and pre-emptive action.

We consider it important that the United Nations, in collaboration with Member States, non-governmental and international organizations, continue to seek the most effective methods of coordination in addressing humanitarian crises. Our Governments support the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in the advancement of humanitarian concerns. The major areas of focus which are outlined in the Secretary-General's report will undoubtedly contribute to the consolidation of the work of the Department. The CARICOM countries recognize the importance of these areas and welcome, in particular, the evolution of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee as the principal policy coordination mechanism, the consolidated appeals process, and the Central Emergency Revolving Fund. We have taken

careful note of the Standing Committee's recommendation for an increase in the size of the Fund and for its timely replenishment, since delayed reimbursements could have a serious impact on the Fund's ability to meet requirements in emergency situations.

The efforts by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to undertake extensive consultations with its humanitarian partners and with the traditional and non-traditional donor communities in order to increase the financial support and broaden the donor base of the Fund are indeed commendable and can only serve to consolidate the important work of the Department and its bodies.

The CARICOM countries acknowledge the importance of ongoing work in database and information compilation in a variety of critical areas, including the Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS), the International Emergency Readiness and Response Information System, the de-mining database and the Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities. New technologies, particularly in data-gathering and communication, have made possible many advances in the predictability of potentially destructive natural phenomena. We know from firsthand experience the vital role that timely and accurate information plays at all stages of an emergency, and anticipate the development of close collaboration between the United Nations and our Governments in this regard in areas relevant to our circumstances.

The tragedies that continue to confront the international community are indeed overwhelming. The growth in the frequency and brutality of intra-State conflict is a defining feature of the 1990s. The reality of contemporary warfare is evident in the proliferation of displaced persons who are obliged to cross borders to flee from the horrors of war. The violence of modern warfare is compounded by the increase in the number of persons affected.

Over the last 25 years, the damage caused to people and to the productive infrastructure of developing countries by natural phenomena has also risen. Moreover, natural disasters, like complex emergencies, absorb increasing amounts of global resources and retard development agendas. Besides human and economic losses, they have in some instances destabilized the social and political fabric.

The democracies of the Caribbean have fortunately been spared the instability and the ravages of war and civil strife. However, hurricanes, floods, storms, landslides, volcanic activity and drought have proved to be equally destructive for our countries. In the aftermath of these natural tragedies, thousands are left homeless, fatalities are not uncommon, and billions of dollars in economic losses are often recorded. We therefore concur with the Secretary-General in his report that vulnerability to disasters has become a major obstacle to economic and social development. We recall the estimate that the impact of natural disasters is 20 times greater in poorer countries than in industrialized ones.

The extreme vulnerability of the Caribbean to natural disasters is demonstrated by the multiple occurrences of hurricanes, storms, floods and landslides which leave their annual trail of misery throughout our region. This year in particular has been testimony to the fact that hurricanes can destroy the social and economic infrastructure of our various countries. In September, hurricane Luis left a trail of destruction and devastation in the islands of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Maarten and the Virgin Islands, leaving thousands without shelter or access to adequate supplies of food, water, electricity and other basic services. Extensive damage to crops estimated at some 80 per cent was reported in Dominica. Prior to hurricane Luis, damage caused by tropical storm Iris was also reported in August. Possibly the worst hit was Antigua and Barbuda, with damage estimated by the Government at approximately $350 million. The tourist industry was dealt a blow with severe repercussions for those employed in the industry.

The island of Barbados, particularly the eastern parishes, was also hit by hurricane Marilyn, which damaged mainly houses and utility services, causing some 1,400 persons to seek shelter. The southern islands of the Bahamas were also affected by tropical storm Erin, which caused interruptions in telephone and electricity supply networks. The hurricane season was a particularly prolific one, thereby illustrating the vulnerability of the Caribbean islands to natural disasters of this kind.

Although not affected by natural disaster, Guyana was affected by the spillage of cyanide from the Omai gold mine. This generated grave concern for and among the inhabitants of the area and about the environmental effects, especially given the fact that the cyanide was reported to have contaminated the river water.

It is experiences like these that have led our region to give priority attention to the strengthening of national and regional institutions and mechanisms aimed at increasing the capabilities of our disaster-prone countries

in preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. A comprehensive blueprint for action in this regard is provided in chapter II of the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, through which the international community gave special recognition to the extreme vulnerability of small island developing States to the effects of natural and environmental disasters. Strong commitment and support at the international level and by the United Nations agencies operating in the humanitarian assistance field are indispensable for the successful implementation of the important actions recommended in that chapter to address the special needs of this group of countries.

At this juncture, CARICOM wishes to express sincere gratitude to the United Nations, and in particular to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), as well as to those countries which, in the aftermath of the recent hurricanes, helped provide emergency relief assistance and contributed to the restoration of devastated areas. The emergency and other assistance that was received in this crisis is a true indication of the willingness of the United Nations and the international community in general to contribute and respond readily to crises.

The Yokohama Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, held in May 1994, took into consideration the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action, and, in the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World, accorded special consideration to the particular situation of small island developing States.

Our Governments participated actively in this Conference, and we are fully supportive of its outcomes, as we are of the goals and activities of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. The issues these complementary activities have sought to highlight are of direct relevance to the situations we face in the Caribbean region, and we look forward to cooperating closely with the secretariat for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction in devising relevant programmes in respect of our region, on the basis of the Yokohama Strategy.

The CARICOM member States wish to thank the various United Nations and regional organizations, bilateral donors and non-governmental organizations that have supported our efforts to develop a comprehensive disaster-management infrastructure to serve the countries of the subregion. The assistance of WHO, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) have been of considerable significance in this context. PAHO, in particular, has been collaborating closely with regional Governments and has provided advisory health services in the humanitarian field, as well as contributing to the capacity-building needs of the region through seminars, workshops, public-awareness efforts and the introduction of its Supply Management Project, which is designed to sort, classify and inventory the arrival of large quantities of relief supplies in post-disaster situations. A memorandum of understanding between PAHO and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), established in 1991 in order to strengthen the region's institutional capacity for disaster management and response, formalized its designation as health-disaster response advisor to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency.

The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency again successfully demonstrated its capacity to respond to the onslaught of the various hurricanes and tropical storms this season. With every crisis important lessons are learned, which invariably contribute to the strengthening of future procedures. CDERA has been working to refine its relief-supply tracking system, and has coordinated several important activities in community disaster planning, shelter management and enhancing the development of disaster exercise and simulation capability within member States. Caribbean Governments wish to put on record their appreciation for the funding and support of these activities, provided in particular by the Canadian International Development Agency, through its International Humanitarian Assistance Programme, and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of the United States Agency for International Development. The non-governmental organization community, in particular the Red Cross Societies and the Caribbean Conference of Churches, have also played an important role in these activities.

The CARICOM member States wish to reiterate the need for international humanitarian policies to emphasize and provide adequately for the continuum from relief to rehabilitation and development if long-term solutions are to be found. We are also persuaded, from our own direct experience, that one of the priority objectives of these policies should be the decentralization of response strategies through the strengthening of institutional

disaster-management capabilities at the local, national and subregional levels. We also believe that the traditional knowledge and experience of the populations and Governments of disaster-prone countries are vital resources which must be more effectively developed and utilized.

CARICOM countries continue to give their full support to the "White Helmets" initiative as an innovative method by which the United Nations can tackle aspects of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development in a thorough and cost-effective manner.

Indeed, the "White Helmets" initiative demonstrates that it is still possible to arrive at creative solutions to long-standing problems, not by devising new programmes but by utilizing mechanisms that already exist within the United Nations system.

In this regard, we wish once again to express our appreciation to the Government of Argentina, not only for conceptualizing the "White Helmets" initiative, but for continuing to contribute financial and personnel resources towards its implementation. We believe that it is important for the success of the programme for there to be careful coordination of its activities with other sectors of the United Nations system and other international organizations.

It is against this background that we welcome the coordinating role being played by the United Nations Volunteers programme, which functions as the operational arm of the "White Helmets" initiative.

The project activities already identified cover the range of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development. To cite two examples from the Caribbean region, in Haiti, where the initiative is already operational, the project is aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of food distribution.

The pilot project in Jamaica, which will commence shortly, will focus on the rehabilitation of hospital equipment. This project should provide useful lessons which can be applied in many other countries, in emergency as well as in non-emergency situations.

We also wish to emphasize the valuable contribution of the United Nations Volunteers, without whom the "White Helmets" initiative could not have been implemented. We believe that we should continue to encourage the use of "White Helmets" to support activities in the area of emergency humanitarian assistance, as well as in the promotion of a smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development.

Mr. Kaid (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation wishes to refer to the Secretary-General's report (A/50/301) on the provision of assistance to Yemen under item 20 (b) of the agenda. In this respect, we should like to express our thanks and appreciation for the Secretary-General's efforts in preparing the report. We should like also to thank the organizations, specialized agencies and Member States that have contributed to the provision of assistance to Yemen for their prompt response to the Government's appeal for assistance in a number of major areas. We look forward to an enhanced response to our needs in view of the economic and political reforms undertaken by Yemen.

As is well known, my country was the victim of a war as a result of a secessionist attempt which sought to undermine our unity. As a result, the economic structures of the country have suffered great damage. It is our hope that the international community and the United Nations organizations as well as non-governmental organizations and States would step up their assistance in order to enable us to cope with the devastation and loss caused by that war to our national economy.

Mr. Habiyaremye (Rwanda) (*interpretation from French*): This is not the first time that the Rwandese delegation has addressed this Assembly, over which Mr. Freitas do Amaral is so worthily presiding at this fiftieth session, on the subject of refugees, the restoration of peace, and Rwanda's reconstruction and social and economic development after the unfortunate events of last year: war, genocide and massacres, as well as the resultant massive exodus of Rwandans.

May I express through you, Sir, the thanks of the Rwandese survivors, impoverished and traumatized, for the concern displayed by the international community in this difficult situation. We appreciate the way it responded to the appeal in resolution 49/23. One year after the adoption of that resolution without a vote, it is time for an assessment, and the report of the Secretary-General before us in document A/50/654 sets the tone for this. The delegation of Rwanda is speaking to reiterate its appeal for the international community's solidarity with Rwanda, which is doing everything possible to ensure a normal life in Rwanda that will last. In order to bring the voices of our international partners into harmony, I should like to dwell for a moment on Rwanda's experience so that the international community can

measure the importance of the tireless efforts of the Rwandese Government and the efforts of the international community, of which the Rwandese Government has been the beneficiary.

The Government of national union, in office since 19 July 1994, has made the return of refugees the highest priority, not only to regain its seriously affected human capital, but also to break with the exclusionary policies motivated by the segregationist political aims that had previously prevailed in the country. Great progress has truly been made, not in restoring a semblance of normality in Rwanda but, rather, in finding a lasting solution to the problem of the internally displaced and the repatriated persons, in restoring full peace, in reconstructing Rwanda, and in ensuring its social and economic development.

The source of the internal tensions that the Secretary-General draws attention to in paragraph 94 of his report is the extraterritoriality of the problem of the repatriation of refugees and the international community's apathy in regard to the threat from, and the repeated attempts at the destabilization of Rwanda by, the former governmental forces, which are being rearmed and are operating with impunity. These irregular forces are not in Rwanda; they are on the borders of neighbouring countries. Rwanda is subjected to infiltration and acts of terrorism and banditry perpetrated by these elements of the former government, protected by certain friendly countries, openly pointed to in the report under consideration. The processes of repatriation, reconciliation and reconstruction have begun, but they are undermined by the insecurity caused by the reports of intimidation and disinformation in certain refugee camps, which are preventing refugees from agreeing freely to repatriation despite the presence of courageous soldiers and police.

The international community has witnessed the Rwandese Government's openness to dialogue and its cooperation in all forums that have taken up the problem of Rwandan refugees. In gratitude for the international community's support, the Government of Rwanda has always been faithful to the commitments it made at the Nairobi and Bujumbura conferences. However, the same political will should compel those who are involved in this problem, either directly or indirectly.

It is time for the procrastination based on the pretext that the ethnic problems are insurmountable to stop and for the policies aimed at stabilizing the Great Lakes subregion to prevail over the selfish and machiavellian interests of some. Without any further delay, States — above all, those in the region — must implement Security Council resolutions 955 (1994), which established the International Tribunal for Rwanda, and 978 (1995), which urged States to arrest and detain persons found within their territory against whom there is sufficient evidence that they were responsible for acts within the jurisdiction of the International Tribunal for Rwanda. These Security Council resolutions correspond completely to the concerns of the Rwandese Government, which regards justice as an indispensable and sure step towards the reconciliation among the people of Rwanda.

Thus justice is of a twofold nature: there must be distributive justice to identify the guilty and assail the impunity of all criminals who acted with intent; and this must be complemented by commutative justice to oversee the development of a "social contract" of reconciliation that will enable Rwandese society to mend a social fabric that has been sorely rent by genocide and massacre and thus to rebuild the foundations of the nation that Rwanda once was.

Repatriation, the justice of reconciliation, and reconstruction without threat of attack or mine-laying on Rwanda's territory: all of this must take place. Repatriating the genuine refugees will make it possible to identify those responsible for genocide — who are not only blocking those who wish to return home, but who are preparing an armed invasion. Once it has been restored, justice will let us sort out the criminals from the innocent, and to free the latter from our prisons.

In that connection, members must try to understand that the pitiable conditions in prisons and detention centres are of concern to the Government of Rwanda. But these are matched by the magnitude of the crimes and the number of criminals implicated in horrors to which the entire international community closed its eyes in amazed resignation.

Within its limited means, my Government has already established high judicial bodies, and a Triage Commission is about to begin its work. We acknowledge the aid provided to improve conditions of detention. Those conditions were not intentional, but were imposed by the unusual circumstances that dictated arrests that, while massive in number, were not arbitrary.

The restoration of the economy and the undertaking of development projects in Rwanda remain fundamental to the creation of conditions that will favour the return of the refugees. That crucial objective must be recognized

by all of my Government's international partners, including non-governmental organizations, whose mandates must in no case be incompatible with the common task of reconstruction and socio-economic restoration.

In conclusion, my delegation echoes the Secretary-General's appeal to the donor community speedily to fulfil their promises of support and provide practical measures of development assistance. To that end, Rwanda intends soon to submit a draft resolution based on the resolution adopted last year, which will request that the question of assistance to Rwanda be retained on the agenda of the fifty-first session.

Mr. DeCotiis (United States): The United States is a sponsor and a strong supporter of draft resolution A/50/L.23, on "White Helmets". When President Menem of Argentina first announced the "White Helmets" idea, President Clinton endorsed the concept here in the General Assembly. Since that time it has captured the imagination of many of us who believe that the United Nations makes the world a better place.

The United States shares with numerous other nations a long tradition of volunteerism. The American wilderness was tamed and our nation was built on the cooperative labour of people who knew that none would survive and prosper unless all did so. A few days ago we celebrated Thanksgiving, commemorating a time when the Pilgrims newly arrived in New England gave thanks for the assistance they received from their God and from their neighbours, the Native Americans. The pioneers who pushed westward continued this tradition of cooperation and mutual voluntary assistance, taking part in community harvest activities, quilting bees and barn raisings. This tradition continues today in such forms as the Peace Corps, the Americorps volunteers who teach in our inner-city schools, and the thousands of non-governmental organizations which continue their good work thanks to those who contribute time and money.

But willing hands and hearts are only part of the total picture. In order to succeed in practice, the "White Helmets" concept will require material and logistical support, experienced leadership, a clearly defined and achievable mission, and coordination with the many organizations involved in relief, recovery and development. This is why my delegation has strongly urged that "White Helmet" activities be coordinated through the United Nations Volunteers. We are pleased to see that this draft resolution points to the operational role of the United Nations Volunteers in selection, training, deployment and effective utilization of the "White Helmets".

As the Secretariat recently reported, "White Helmet" activities have already been identified for Armenia, Haiti, Gaza, Angola and Jamaica. We note with interest that other proposals are being put forward to address needs in the Great Lakes region of Africa and in Latin America, and we expect that future opportunities may soon arise. Our greatest challenge in managing these activities will not be to find opportunities or willing and capable volunteers, but to define achievable project goals clearly and to ensure the support and safety of the volunteers once they are in place.

The United States looks forward to playing an appropriate role in this worthy effort. In this connection, we have identified the United States Agency for International Development and the Federal Emergency Management Agency as our points of contact in matters relating to "White Helmets".

The "White Helmets" concept offers a continuing opportunity for citizens of all nations to bring their experience and wisdom to bear on some of our most challenging problems. It is a useful mechanism for expanded North-South and South-South cooperation. It can be brought to bear on a given situation at any stage in the continuum of relief, recovery and development. And its greatest strength will be the enthusiasm of those selected for the honour of representing all of our countries in service to those in greatest need.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.